

Message Text

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TAGS: OREP, PFOR, IZ, XF, US

SUBJECT: SENATOR KENNEDY'S VISIT TO IRAQ

REF: BAGHDAD 563

1. ALTHOUGH I DID NOT RECEIVE DETAILED ACCOUNT FROM SENATOR KENNEDY OF HIS MEETINGS WITH GOI OFFICIALS, MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT NO NEW GROUND WAS BROKEN. PRESIDENT AL-BAKR, WHO GAINED STRENGTH AND INTEREST AS ONE AND-A-HALF HOUR MEETING

PROGRESSED, CONCENTRATED ON HISTORICAL REVIEW OF ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM AND BASIS FOR IRAQI POSITION; I.E. IRAQ WILL NOT OBSTRUCT SETTLEMENT, BUT DOES NOT BELIEVE THERE WILL BE ONE BECAUSE ISRAEL

HAS NOT GIVEN UP ITS EXPANSIONIST AIMS AND U.S. LACKS POLITICAL WILL AND DETERMINATION TO FORCE ISRAEL INTO SETTLEMENT ACCEPTABLE TO ARABS.

2. TWO HOUR MEETING WITH FORMIN HAMMADI WAS SURPRISINGLY WARM AND CORDIAL (HAMMADI CONSIDERED REAL COLD FISH) WHICH KENNEDY AIDE ATTRIBUTED TO EXCELLENT PRESENTATION AND CHARM OF SENATOR. WHILE LATTER MAY HAVE HAD SOME IMPACT I BELIEVE MORE IMPORTANT FACTOR MAY HAVE BEEN THAT FORMIN HAD THE WORD THAT KENNEDY WAS VERY MUCH PERSONA GRATA. MEETING CONCENTRATED ON OIL, RAW MATERIALS, AND COOPERATION BETWEEN OIL PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS WITH HAMMADI ENDORSING MUCH OF KENNEDY POSITION AS CONTAINED IN RECENT SPEECH AT U.N. ON ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT, HAMMADI STATED FLATLY THAT IRAQ DID NOT WANT A WAR. MEETING
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WITH MINPET ABDUL KARIM ALSO CONCENTRATED ON OIL AND SENATOR

DESCRIBED IRAQI POSITION AS VERY TOUGH.

3. FROM SENATOR'S POINT OF VIEW, VISIT WAS SERIOUSLY MARRED BY FAILURE TO HAVE MEETING WITH SADDAM HUSSEIN. MEETING REQUESTED ALONG WITH OTHER THREE AND CODEL IN USINT HAD BEEN LED TO

BELIEVE MEETING WOULD TAKE PLACE SUNDAY EVENING. WE HAD QUERIED MFA EACH DAY WHETHER TIME HAD YET BEEN SET. AFTER REPEATED REQUESTS SUNDAY EVENING, PROTOCOL INFORMED US THAT MEETING WOULD NOT TAKE PLACE. THEY POINTED OUT THAT IT ALMOST UNPRECEDENTED FOR VISITOR TO BE RECEIVED BY BOTH AL-BAKR AND DADDAM. THIS DID LITTLE TO MOLLIFY THE SENATOR SINCE HE FELT HE HAD NOT RECEIVED COURTESY OF RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR MEETING. LAST MINUTE ATTEMPT TO ARRANGE MEETING WITH SADDAM MONDAY MORNING FAILED, BUT SENATOR DID SPEAK WITH FORMIN HAMMADI BY PHONE JUST BEGORE DEPARTURE. HAMMADN TOLD HIM DECISION THAT HE WOULD NOT SEE SADDAM WAS MADE PRIOR TO SENATORS ARRIVAL AND HE APOLOGIZED FOR MFA'S FAILURE TO SO INFORM SENATOR.

4. SENATOR'S CONCERN IN NOT SEEING SADDAM WAS THAT IT WOULD UNDEHCUT HIS ABILITY TO SPEAK AUTHORITATIVELY ABOUT IRAQ AND

THAT JOURNALIST IN PARTY (ABC-TV, EDWARD P. MORGAN AND NEWSWEEK) WOULD PLAY IT AS A SNUB. WHILE RECOGNIZING VALIDITY OF HIS PERSONAL CONCERN AND SHORTSIGHTEDNESS OF SADDAM HUSSEIN IN NOT TAKING OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH FIRST MAJOR AMERICAN POLITICIAN TO VISIT IRAQ SINCE 1967, I REPEATEDLY STRESSED TO SENATOR AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES THAT GOI HAD GIVEN UNPRECEDENTED AND PUBLIC RECEPTION TO SENATOR AND THAT IT REPRESENTED IMPORTANT LANDMARK ON PATH OF GRADUAL IMPROVEMENT OF U.S. -IRAQI RELATIONS.

5. COMMENT: SADDAM'S DECISION NOT TO SEE KENNEDY WAS, IN MY VIEW, COMBINATION OF DESIRE TO EXHIBIT SOME RESTRAINT IN OTHERWISE UNPRECEDENTED RECEPTION FOR AN AMERICAN LEADER AND OF DESIRE TO

HAVE PRESIDENT AL-BAKR OUT IN FRONT AT THIS TIME IN ESTABLISHING IRAQ'S "AMERICAN CONNECTION" STILL A SENSITIVE POLITICAL ISSUE

WITHIN REGIME. FROM USG POINT OF VIEW VISIT WAS MAJOR SUCCESS, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN IRAQI SATISFACTION AT BEING RECOGNIZED, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT DEPARTMENT CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE PROMINENT AMERICAN BUSINESS AND POLITICAL LEADERS TO VISIT IRAQ. LOWRIE

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